

Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Award in 2013

Announced by Kedar Misra, Odisha360.com (29 Aug 2013)



Guru Ghanashyam Panda and Guru Shankar Behera

Guru Kelucharan award for Odissi guru, vocalist
The Times of India (29 Aug 2013)

Guru Kelucharan awards function
The Hindu (29 Aug 2013)

The Interview Times

CULTURE TIMES

Dedicated to ODISSI

Over the years, the Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Award has come to enjoy a unique place in the cultural calendar of Odisha. It is the dream of every artist worth his salt to win the coveted award, given away for significant contribution to the world of Odissi music and dance by Srijan, the cultural organisation founded by the late Odissi maestro, every year. And it was no different for veteran Mumbai-based Odissi dance guru Guru Shankar Behera and Odissi vocalist Guru Ghanashyam Panda. Despite their own significant contribution to the world of Odissi, the two stalwarts were over the moon when they were conferred.



GURU SHANKAR BEHERA
Odissi dance guru

GURU GHANASHYAM PANDA
Odissi vocalist

THE INTERVIEW TIMES BUREAU

GURU SHANKAR BEHERA
How did you feel after receiving the Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Award 2013?

I feel elated that I have received an award from my guru's institution (Srijan), which is like an award from my guru himself. Receiving an award in Odisha, which is my birth place and also the place where I learnt the basics of Odissi, was the icing on the cake.

You were associated with Guraji from the beginning. How would you remember him?

Guraji always treated me like his son. For me, he was Lord Jagannath himself. He was meticulous in almost everything about Odissi: make-up, stage preparation, lighting, music, etc. He analysed each step and movement for hours and days till he reached perfection. It is almost impossible to have all these qualities in a human being. People loved him and were mesmerized by his behaviour. He taught me the technicalities of Odissi without which it would not have been possible for me to reach where I have in Odissi. He might have left us but he is always with me through Odissi.

You have been associated with Odissi for over four decades. How would you describe your journey so far?

Coming from a non-descript village in Ganjam to receiving Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Award – it has been a long journey, full of ups and downs. I feel I was born to learn Odissi. It was in my destiny that I learned Odissi from legends like Guru Shri Mahadev Rout, Guru Shri Parikshit Charan Das, Guru Shri Dev Prasad Das and – last but not the least – Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra himself. I feel fortunate that I was the first to popularize Odissi in Mumbai and in many countries. I will continue to work for Odissi till my last breathe.

Are you happy with the growth of Odissi over the years?

Odissi has gained immense popularity over the years, both nationally and globally. However, it has changed a lot over the years. The Odissi that Guraji did was a much purer version than what we see today. The grace, the beauty, the smoothness of body movements and the dedication that were the hallmark of the legends are missing in present day dancers. Dancers these days try innovative choreography without giving due importance to the technicalities of the Odissi.

Another bane for Odissi is the fact that many students leave the field midway. This is not way it should be. They should continue learning and practicing till they achieve perfection and not chuck it up all of a sudden. Guraji spent hours and hours teaching each technique to perfection till he felt satisfied. The same dedication should be there in every Odissi teacher today.

What according to you should be the basic qualities of an Odissi dancer?

The qualities that an Odissi dancer should have are dedication, patience and perfectionism. He should always follow his Guru and his style of Odissi. The dancer should at first focus on preparing the body which requires continuous practice that can take almost two years. Similarly, the teacher should have enormous patience while teaching students till they achieve perfection in each and every step.

What are your plans to promote Odissi in the coming years?

I have taught and promoted Odissi for the last 43 years in India and abroad. I have taught more students abroad than in India. In future, I wish to have my own school in India and teach and promote Odissi. I am still excited about contributing to Odissi today and do whatever I can.

GURU GHANASHYAM PANDA
How did you feel after receiving Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Award 2013?

When I was informed about this Award, I was a little surprised because I felt many senior Gurus and scholars deserved this award more than me. But there is no doubt that the Award means a lot to me.

How did you become a vocalist?

Since childhood, I had a fascination for music. My maths teacher Guru Banshihar Biswal and my elder sister asked me to try singing. So I learnt Odissi vocal from Guru Jogenndranath Pati very late in my life. Once, my Guru asked me to sing at my village function that was presided over by Kenduguraj Raja Laxmi Narayan Bhargava. He was so impressed with my voice that he recommended my name for a place in the Sangeet Natak Academy. Once I took admission in Sangeet Natak Academy, I have not looked back.

Do you think classical music is on the decline?

Lack of patience among youngsters to listen and practice music should be blamed for the decline of classical music. The proliferation of classical music schools and institutions is certainly encouraging. But on the flip side, everyone wants to make money and fame from music these days. Due to this, the quality of music has deteriorated. The ambience required for a student to learn music is missing today. Music should be made mandatory in schools and colleges.

You have worked in both Odia and Hindi films. How has been the experience?

I have lent my voice in nearly 20 Odia films and a Hindi movie 'Ye Khami Nahin' though my first two Odia films 'Kaal Jal' and 'Neha Shaili' were never released. I have wonderful memories working under many musical greats who had asked me to settle down in Mumbai permanently. But I preferred to stay in Odisha and have tried to contribute to Odissi music as much as possible.

Getting an Award in Guraji's name was a rare honour for me. This Award is of national repute and people throughout India recognize the recipients of this Award.

What do you have to say about Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra?

I have worked with Guraji in the past. Those days, people outside India recognized Odisha by three things - Lord Jagannath, Biju Patnaik and Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra. This alone speaks the kind of charismatic personality Guraji had. It was because of Guraji's efforts and hard work that Odissi has got a global audience today.

What is your view on Odissi music still awaiting classical status?

It is a matter of regret that the classical tag has eluded Odissi music. Our senior Gurus and scholars perhaps need to look at the reasons that have prevented Odissi